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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - DECEMBER 18

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

North Kivu Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) According to information provided at the December 18 UN security meeting in Goma, there has been heavy fighting between CNDP and PARECO in Kahira and Bigogwe approximately 15 kilometers northeast of Masisi Center, Masisi Territory. These two villages had been controlled by PARECO, and the CNDP decided to attack them at 5:00 AM this morning. The two villages are now under CNDP control.

¶3. (SBU) Additionally, forced recruitment by the CNDP continues in Rutshuru, Tongo, Rugari, Kibumba, and Rumangabo. The CNDP is assessed to be recruiting more aggressively. The CNDP also conducted a search of all houses in Kiwanja on December 17, resulting in atrocities committed against the population. A health center was looted and security guards were wounded because they did not have the telephones and money that CNDP forces demanded.

¶4. (SBU) There was an exchange of fire in Goma during the night of December 17 that lasted approximately 20 minutes. It turned out to be between two groups of FARDC soldiers responding to a call of armed robbery in a Goma neighborhood. The two groups did not have communication equipment, preventing them from coordinating with each other. Two soldiers were seriously wounded in the incident.

¶5. (SBU) It was also reported that heavily armed PARECO forces (newly equipped with weapons they never had before) are concentrated in Kisharu and Ishasha, Rutshuru Territory. Some of these forces were seen yesterday moving toward Kiwanja, and were reportedly as close as 15 kilometers away; the CNDP has also concentrated its soldiers outside Kiwanja on the road to Ishasha. It was expected that PARECO would reach Kiwanja the night of December 17, but as of the present time no clashes have been reported in the area. Some Kiwanja residents have started moving south toward Rutshuru. Additionally, the FDLR has indicated that it will increase sabotage operations in all CNDP controlled areas.

¶6. (SBU) At the December 16 UN security meeting, partners reported that an armed attack occurred in the home of an international NGO staff member in Goma town over the weekend. Additionally, sometime between December 13 and 14, armed men in CNDP uniforms hijacked an International Medical Corps (IMC) vehicle transporting two staff members and a pregnant woman from the Kibumba health center to the Virunga hospital in Goma. The soldiers threatened everyone in the vehicle and ordered the driver to proceed to the Mahora IDP camp two kilometers away. Upon arrival, a soldier who learned of the hijacking arranged for the release of the vehicle and staff. As a result of this incident, IMC has suspended activities in

CNDP-controlled territory pending a full investigation.

¶17. (SBU) NGO's held a meeting in Kiwanja on December 16 to discuss the shooting death of the passenger in the AVSI vehicle on December 15. The CNDP attended and claimed they had apprehended an FARDC defector responsible for the shooting. The CNDP used the opportunity to demand the dismantling of the IDP camp just outside the MONUC base in Rutshuru, a demand that MONUC rejected.

¶18. (SBU) MONUC is considering round-the-clock police patrol of the Kibati IDP camp on the outskirts of Goma in an attempt to put a stop to persistent cases of rape and harassment, typically perpetrated by the FARDC. MONUC is concerned that these abuses could eventually set off a broader conflagration.

Nairobi Process

¶19. (SBU) International Facilitation team will restart regular meetings of the Joint Monitoring Group Task Force (JMG TF) in Goma on December 19. USG Goma Poloff will chair the initial meetings. Rwandan and DRC participants have agreed to attend and brief on recent meetings of "4 x 4 commission" ministerial talks and the ongoing Nairobi talks (Note: MONUC transported the eight person CNDP negotiating team to Nairobi December 17. End note.). The restart of the JMG TF could be a positive sign that the Nairobi process is still alive.

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